

# Top 10 Ways to Lobby Your Legislator

The following “**top ten list**” of advocacy actions should be taken by all transit supporters when attempting to influence policy or funding decisions affecting local or state transit operations:

## 1. GET INVOLVED

People often believe their voice will not be heard, or does not matter in the political process. This is INCORRECT! Ideas become law, idea champions sponsor laws and legislators listen to the public; therefore, the public can affect laws and other public policy outcomes.

## 2. LEARN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Bills go through a long process to become laws. Every bill must be voted on at least four times before it is sent to the Governor. (If you would like more information on the legislative process please contact the Association.)

## 3. LEARN THE LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

Each year the legislative process is subject to a different set of deadlines. These dates affect the schedule of bill hearings, and determine when your legislator will be home in the district office versus in Sacramento. For example, in 2009 the Legislature will recess from September 11 until early December. More than likely this means legislators will be in their district offices during this period. (If you would like more information on the legislative calendar please contact the Association.)

## 4. FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS ARE IMPORTANT

Legislators often make time to meet with people from their district. When meeting in person it is important to remember the basics to cover during the meeting:

- What do you want?
- Who should you ask?
- How should you ask?
- How should you follow-up?
- How can you build your goodwill?

Be brief, know your facts, know how the issue impacts your district and be positive.

## 5. PUBLIC TESTIMONY IS CRUCIAL

In each House a public hearing is conducted on every bill at least once by a policy committee, this can be the best time to testify. Remember to identify yourself, state your position, and briefly explain your position. Expect delays and postponements, but you will get an opportunity to make your voice heard.

## 6. PHONE CALLS

If you have an existing relationship with your legislator, rely on that tool. For example, last year in the waning hours of the legislative session Association staff was defending last minute cuts to transit. Association staff mobilized selected members to call their legislators and these legislators responded to these personal calls.

## 7. LETTERS

Probably the most popular mode of communication used to affect the legislative process. Always write your legislator and the Chair of the committee in which the bill of interest to you is being heard. Identify the bill number and author at the top of your letter and concisely state your requests (i.e. support the bill, oppose, amend, etc.).

Remember to copy the bill’s author and repeat this process as the bill moves through the Legislature.

## 8. LEGISLATIVE STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

Legislators have very busy schedules, and although they would like to meet with everyone, time does not permit all meeting requests. In the era of term limits, staff has become the institutional memory of the Legislature, as well as more accessible. Make staff contacts and remember their name because you will deal with staff the majority of the time.

## 9. REACH OUT

Your legislator represents a community; therefore, you should involve your legislator in local events. In addition, you should make attempts to recognize your elected officials in newsletters and other articles.

## 10. REMEMBER DISTRICT OFFICES

Too often citizens and advocates only contact Capitol Offices; District Office meetings are overlooked, but present a great opportunity to meet staff and legislators to brief them on projects and priorities in the district.